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BY

T. S. DENISON.

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HARD CIDER

A TEMPERANCE SKETCH

BY

T. S. DENISON

*Author of Odds with the Enemy; Initiating a Granper; Wanted, a
Correspondent; A Family Strike; Seth Greenback; Hans Von
Smash; Borrowing Trouble; Two Ghosts in White; The Pull-
Buck; Country Justice; The Assessor; The Sparkling
Cup; Loued the Pauper; Our Country; The School-
Mo'am; The Kansas Immigrants; The Irish
Linen Peddler; Is the Editor In? An Only
Daughter; Pets of Society; Too much
of a good Thing. Etc., Etc.*



CHICAGO:

T. S. DENISON.

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CHARACTERS.

MR. YOUNG, *From the City.*

MR. JACKSON, *A Farmer.*

MRS. JACKSON.

FRED JACKSON.

NELLIE JACKSON.

WILL BROWN.

W. L. KLEIN & CO., PRINTERS.

HARD CIDER.

SCENE. SQUIRE JACKSON'S sitting-room. Winter evening. Seated, JACKSON and YOUNG in conversation. MRS. JACKSON sewing. NELLIE reading. Curtain rises.

Young. Jackson, old fellow, you have been deuced lucky in this world. You were always lucky. Don't you remember I used to tell you at school that you would make your mark in the world?

Jackson. Mark! Ha! Ha! Young, where is the mark? I haven't seen it.

Young. All around you man. You have everything necessary to make a man happy. A handsome wife—

Jackson. Hold on there! Mrs. Jackson is blushing.

Mrs. J. My husband thinks all compliments flattery except when applied to himself.

Jackson. Pshaw, wife! Married women have no need of continuous compliment. It turns their heads.

Mrs. J. And so causes neglect of domestic duties as our worthy critic would have it.

Young. I shall advocate your cause, Mrs. Jackson. No lady shall appeal to me in vain.

Nellie. Pa, you might as well surrender. We have the majority.

Jackson. What! have you gone over to the enemy, too, Nellie? Aha, Young, you haven't forgot your old cunning. You always knew how to get the girls on your side.

Young. Yes, and what is better, I always keep them there. But as I was saying, really, Jackson, you have been very lucky. You have a fine family, a good farm, and above all a good home. You will soon grow gray with honors. I see you are a *squire* already.

Mrs. J. (Laughing.) O yes! When we first came here he was nothing but Jim Jackson. Now he is squire Jackson.

Nellie. With the power to write *J. P.* in capitals after his name.

Jackson. Humph! My dignities increase until I shall be unable to bear them all I am afraid.

Mrs. J. Mr. Young, are you city folks not prosperous too?

Jackson. No, they are always complaining. Friend Young has a nice store, a paying business and a pretty easy time.

Young. Working twelve hours per day!

Jackson. Pooh! I've put in fourteen in haying time, and thought nothing of it. You city folks live on the top of the heap.

Young. And you country folks revel in milk and honey.

Jackson. Milk and honey are nice things to talk about, but they don't run out of the rocks. Nellie, where is Fred?

Nellie. I think he and cousin Will went to the barn.

Jackson. I wish he would hurry back. I feel a little thirsty. It is time we had a pitcher of cider from the cellar.

Mrs. J. Perhaps Mr. Young is a temperance man, and objects to cider?

Young. Oh no! I think cider is entirely harmless.

Jackson. You prefer wine at home, though. Well, I think wine is a little smoother; but country folks have to put up with cider.

Young. Such cider as yours is not at all hard to take. (*Enter Fred and Will.*)

Jackson. Here you are at last, boys. Fred, bring up a good pitcher of cider; warm it a little at the kitchen stove. It is rather chilly this evening.

Fred. Yes, father, I'll attend to it at once. Shall I bring apples?

Jackson. Of course. (*Exit Fred.*)

Young. Speaking of temperance, I hope you have not joined the ranks of the total abstinence people. I have brought your husband a present of a few bottles of choice wine. Our friend, Mr. Brown, here, can testify to its innocence. It is very fine.

Will. Yes, I think it is innocent enough, if properly used.

Young. Certainly, if properly used.

Mrs. J. But the danger lies in not using it properly. Few people know how to use intoxicating liquors without abusing them.

Will. If there be any such thing as a *proper* use of them.

Mrs. J. Which I often doubt,—seeing the untold ruin and misery they have wrought.

Jackson. (*To Young.*) Hear that, John. That woman will turn out temperance lecturer yet. She actually wanted me to turn out the cider a few weeks ago.

Nellie. That was after Jake Beldon got drunk on it.

Jackson. Tut! tut! child, Jake wasn't drunk. He eat too much and got sick at the stomach. My cider won't make anybody drunk. I make a royal article, and I know just how to keep it. (*Enter Fred with pitcher and glasses.*)

Young. Wait a moment till I bring a bottle of wine from my valise. I think you will enjoy its flavor. (*Exit for wine.*)

Mrs. J. So you have signed the pledge, Will?

Will. Yes, aunt, and I tried hard to-day coming down on the train to persuade Mr. Young to do so, and pitch that wine out of the window, but he was inflexible.

Jackson. It is all right, nephew, for you to think as you do. You are now playing the part of a reformer. But you are young, and you will find out after while that the world won't be reformed.

Young. (*Re-enters.*) That is just what I told him to-day.

Will. I shall try just the same.

Mrs. J. And I sincerely respect your efforts.

Will. I have about persuaded Fred to quit drinking cider.

Nellie. Oh, that is because the cider is getting hard. Fred will begin again when we make fresh cider.

Fred. I'll not do anything of the kind. If I sign a pledge, I'll keep it.

Young. I agree that pledges are all right. If you sign, stick.

Fred. I intend to sign and to stick. Hard cider never did me any good.

Jackson. All right, Fred, do as you please. It does me good, and I will continue a while longer. Did you warm it?

Fred. Yes.

Jackson. (*Pours out a glass.*) Try it, John. It is the best hard cider you ever tasted, I'll venture. (*They drink.*)

Young. That is capital!

Jackson. Just a trifle too warm, though, even for a cold evening like this.

Young. (*Opens bottle of wine.*) Now we will try this wine. (*Fills glasses.*)

Jackson. That will smooth down the cider. (*They drink.*)

Young. Now, Mrs. Jackson, what harm can there be in a social glass of cider or wine? Will you take some?

Mrs. J. There may be no harm in one glass of either, but repetition brings habit, and habit is the master, man the slave. Cider leads to wine, wine to whiskey, and whiskey to ruin.

Young. Oh, whiskey is dangerous, but cider is a different thing.

Fred. It will make people drunk. Jake Beldon—

Jackson. Pooh! we've heard enough about Jake Beldon. He was only sick at the stomach.

Fred. I know a drunken man when I see one, and I know that hard cider made him sick at the stomach and stagger too.

Will. As for wine, I've seen its effects daily in the city.

Young. Well, we are not in the city now. We are in the country having a good time. Try some more wine. (*They drink.*)

Jackson. Try some more cider to wash down that wine. (*They drink.*)

Mrs. J. That is the danger in drinking, soon you will want some more wine to smooth down the cider, and then some more cider to wash down the wine.

Jackson. But then, both are as harmless as water.

Young. I can vouch for wine. I've tried it twenty years and never got drunk.

Jackson. And I have thoroughly tested cider. Why, wife, I could drink a whole pitcher full without feeling its effects.

Will. Mixing wine and cider may be dangerous.

Jackson. Pooh, Will! You're young. I know what I am doing.

Young. So do I. Try some more wine. (*They drink.*)

Jackson. Now just to show the boys that this cider won't hurt anybody, I'll take another glass or two.

Mrs. J. James, beware of the example you are setting the children.

Jackson. I guess I know what I'm doing. I'm going to drink this pitcher of cider.

Young. Not all of it. I'm going to help you.

Mrs. J. Then, gentlemen, I hope you will excuse me for the evening, as doubtless the cider will afford you ample entertainment, and the society of the ladies will only mar your enjoyment. Nellie, we will retire. Good evening, gentlemen.

Nellie. Good evening.

Young. (*Rises to bow.*) Good evening, ladies. (*Attempts to bow, falls on Jackson.*)

Jackson. Hang it, Jack, what are you about? What ails you?

Young. I feel a little dizzy. I think that cider was a little too warm.

Jackson. Pooh! it wasn't the cider at all. You have ridden too far in the cold, and the change has affected you.

Will. (*Aside to Fred.*) They are becoming intoxicated. We must get the liquor away from them.

Fred. All right. You manage the wine and I'll see to the cider. (*Will attempts to slip away the wine bottle unperceived. Is detected by Young.*)

Young. Hold on young man! Not so fast! If you want to try some of that wine, you are welcome to it, but don't attempt any sly game. That is the way with you temperance people. You slip away the bottle to drink behind the door.

Will. Mr. Young, you have had enough; too much, indeed, or you never would have used that speech.

Young. (*Staggering toward Will.*) Come, old boy, forgive me I meant no harm. Les' shake han's. Shake all roun'. Jackson, old pard, why don't you get up and shake hands all round? Say?

Jackson. Sit down. (*Fred is carrying off the pitcher.*) Hello, boy! bring back that pitcher. What the deuce do you mean by

taking away the refreshments till we are done with them? (*Will replaces pitcher.*) Young, sit down, I tell you.

Young. Tha's so. Les' sit down all round. (*Sits down on the floor.*)

Jackson. Will, give Mr. Young a chair. Zounds, boys, what are you about? Put him in a chair. (*They place him in a chair.*)

Young. (*Staring at Jackson.*) Say, Jim! Jim, old boy!

Jackson. (*Testily.*) What do you want?

Young. 'Smy 'pinion you're drunk.

Jackson. Don't be a fool. You're drunk yourself.

Young. Jim, old boy, I maintain, as I maintained before, and as I will maintain as long as I've a maintainance, that you're drunk. Hard cider is what ails you, Jim.

Jackson. (*Testily.*) I tell you I'm not drunk. (*Takes another glass of cider.*)

Young. Yes you are, Jim. When you are not drunk you are good humored; now you're cross as a hungry bear. Gim'me nuther glass cider.

Jackson. (*Crossly.*) Get it yourself.

Young. There, I told you you was drunk. Hard cider got away with you.

Jackson. It's no such thing. It's your vile wine.

Young. I say it's cider, but what's the difference? Jim, give us a song.

Jackson. I can't sing.

Will. Father, shall I show Mr. Young to bed?

Jackson. Go away with your nonsense. We'll take care of ourselves. (*Rises to walk and trips on a chair. Almost falls over it.*)

Young. (*Laughs.*) There I told you you were drunk.

Will. (*Aside.*) What a humiliating spectacle. What will we do with them?

Fred. Get them to bed.

Will. How?

Fred. I'll find a way.

Young. Say Jackson, if you won't sing that song, I will. (*Sings.*) "Should auld acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind?" Of course not. Must not forget auld acquaintance. How are you, Jim, old boy? (*Shakes hands with Jackson.*)

Jackson. John, you're a fool; I can beat that. Let me sing "A southerly wind and a clondy sky." (*Tries to sing but can't.*)

Young. Hold on here, I'm doing the melody. (*Sings first line as before, and stops to shake hands all round.*)

Will. Really, Fred, we must separate them.

Fred. I'll manage it. I'll take Mr. Young up to my room to see my new fowling piece, and put him to bed. You get father into the kitchen to talk about horses. Mr. Young, I forgot to show you my gun. She is a beauty. Let's go and examine it.

HARD CIDER

Young. Le's have more cider first.

Fred. No wait till you come back..

Young. All right! I'll be back in a minute, boys.

Will. Uncle, I always feel more at home by the kitchen fire. Suppose we have a good chat all to ourselves.

Jackson. Very well, come right along. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE II.—*Next morning. All present except Young who enters as the curtain rises.*

Young. Mrs. Jackson, I sincerely beg your pardon for the unseemly events of last evening. Can you forgive so grave a breach of decorum?

Mrs. J. I freely forgive it, but hope the lesson may not pass unheeded.

Young. You are right. Intemperance is a dreadful evil, and even wine and cider are dangerous.

Will. I am glad you are at last thoroughly convinced. And since you are, why not sign the pledge at once and lend your influence to the cause of temperance.

Young. I am quite willing to do so.

Jackson. I can't see why the deuce taking a little wine and hard cider should have such an effect. I really believe I was slightly affected last night.

Mrs. J. And if cider will lead you into such a dangerous position, do you not fear for the safety of our boy—nay, of our girl? Let there be no more temptation in their way lest they may not stop at hard cider, but go on to something stronger and more dangerous.

Jackson. I don't mind signing if the others all do.

Will. I always carry a pledge with me. We will all sign together.

(*Produces pledge, and all sign. Characters stand in a semi-circle. Curtain.*)

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